



RANCHO LOS AMIGOS FOUNDATION
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THE ART *of* RANCHO



CREATED BY RANCHO GRADUATE PATIENT ARTISTS
A PROGRAM FUNDED BY RANCHO LOS AMIGOS FOUNDATION



PAINTING ABOVE BY JASMIN AMADOR
COVER PAINTING BY CASSANDRA TANG

THE ART OF RANCHO



MAGDALIA ORTIZ



JOEL CASTRO



JUAN LAGUNA

Welcome to the Art of Rancho! The Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center team is world-renowned for helping build bridges to independence for persons whose lives have been shattered by a disabling illness or injury.

Rancho Los Amigos Foundation is a charitable non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that supports many essential programs and activities of the Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. We are very proud of all the programs the Foundation supports, including the Art of Rancho, which showcases the artistic accomplishments of Rancho "graduate" artists. These Rancho patients discovered or reignited their artistic talent during their rehabilitation at Rancho. Nearly 50 artists contributed to the "Art of Rancho" collection this year.

Thanks go out from the entire Rancho Los Amigos family to Supervisor Don Knabe, The Rancho Los Amigos Foundation, Amigos Fund and the Rancho staff for their support of our artists. We are also grateful for the incredible portraits of our artists created by Rancho graduate artist Steve Clay. The originals hang on the first floor walls of Rancho's Support Services Annex for all to enjoy.

We salute the courage and the creativity of our Rancho artists, who remind us that no matter how desperate our personal challenges may be, we can overcome them and make our dreams come true.

SAID ABDELSAYED



I was born in Cairo, Egypt, and came to the United States to attend college to become a doctor. In 1974, I nearly died in an auto accident that left me paralyzed from the waist down.

After the accident, I was sent to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, where I discovered my destiny—to be an artist. They gave me a bunch of paper and crayons. It was like opening a new world to me, because it filled me with hope. They taught me a lot about independence and that there are no limits for my art. I feel like I've found my artistic home at Rancho, where I learned to overcome roadblocks and turn negatives into positives.

Now I teach art to students from local schools as well as creating my own artworks. I enjoy painting boats and landscapes, and I also have fun creating large murals for members of the community to enjoy.

They say that in order to have a great plant, you have to find the right soil. We are all seeds that have fallen here and we want to do our best for Rancho because Rancho has done its best for us. I will forever be grateful to Rancho for restoring my creative spirit!

Said. y.



ZINTHIA ALVARADO



I was born in Los Angeles, but when I was 7 years old, I moved to El Salvador with my mother. Soon I was in a terrible accident. I was sitting in the front seat without a seat belt when our car was hit by a bus. I suffered a major spinal cord injury and was diagnosed with paraplegia.

Many years later, I returned to Los Angeles and since then, Rancho has become my home away from home. After having surgery, I was sent to Rancho for rehabilitation. I was an inpatient for two months for treatment for scoliosis, and I am now a Rancho outpatient.

I love Rancho, because it is a place of magic for me and many of my friends who have also had great experiences here. My friends in the adolescent support group are always there for me. The KnowBarriers program taught me how to set and reach goals. The Don Knabe Pediatric Arts Program is amazing. I not only learned how to paint and take interesting photographs—I learned how to express myself in ways I could have never imagined. Now I am proud to participate in the Art of Rancho program. I have become a living example of the magic of Rancho!

Thanks to Rancho, I am having a wonderful life!



Zinthia

JONATHAN ALVARENGA



I was born in East Los Angeles and raised in H-town, Los Angeles as part of a family of four. As a child I was always the ill one. Who knew I would have so many obstacles to overcome?

Raised in the 1990s in a gang-and-drug infested neighborhood, as a child I would see prostitution, shootings, drug deals and police racing to crime scenes. It all seemed so normal. As I reached my early teens, I was intrigued by money stacks, hip-hop knowledge and graffiti on walls, so I hustled with my middle-school friends selling drugs and writing music until my graffiti hobby became an addition.

I no longer sold drugs and I had stopped writing music. I just painted walls with streaks, battery acid, shoe polish and spray paint cans. Soon graffiti became all about turf. Now people started getting hurt, because it was all about knives, bats and guns. I was arrested twice as a young teen, was run over by a car and then shot several times. The shooting led to my rehabilitation at Rancho Los Amigos, where I was given the time and opportunity to really get in touch with my artistic side. Now I am focusing on my music and my art, and what is possible.

I wish to thank all my friends at Rancho for the time and effort invested in me, which helped me overcome all the boundaries I have and gave me the tools to deal with the ones that will surely come.

Jonathan Alvarenga



JASMIN AMADOR



I was born with congenital Muscular Dystrophy. I was able to walk until I was eight years old, then never again. I always thank God for giving me the opportunity to experience what it means to walk.

I focus on the things that I can do, such as art. Art is my passion! It gives me a meaningful way to express myself. This year I decided to attend the Don Knabe Pediatric Arts classes at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. I loved the entire experience, and my teachers were especially amazing.

They were very encouraging to me, and I am very happy to show my artworks at the Art of Rancho show.

Rancho is a fascinating place with people who fight with you and help you to achieve a better life. My art teachers are people like this...encouraging and inspiring me every step of the way!



Jasmin Amador

WILBERT ANTHONY ARIAS



On June 24, 1989, I was shot through the back with a .22-caliber rifle, which severed my spinal cord and caused me to start a new way of living as a quadriplegic. During my 10 months at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, I had the very best rehab possible. Everyone at Rancho has always had words of encouragement, wisdom and praises that I have kept with me always.

In 2003, I came face-to-face with death again because of medical complications. As I was fighting for my life, I began drawing so that there would be something tangible for my family and children to hold onto and see besides memories. Spurred by my faith in God and my doctors, I survived the crisis.

My passion for art was rekindled during my readmission to Rancho for a flap surgery in August of 2010. During my four-month stay, I was introduced to the Art of Rancho program that I am honored to be a part of.

Thanks to Rancho's excellent rehabilitation services, one can excel in life. You just have to set your mind to do so!



CARLOS BENAVIDES



In 2003, I had an accident which changed my whole way of living. I suffered a spinal cord injury, leaving me an incomplete quadriplegic. I am now an outpatient at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center.

Being in a wheelchair and in constant pain has made me more aware of my surroundings and the challenges of everyday life. I also realize that when someone has a life-altering injury they have to find a way to express who they are. My designs, pictures and music express who I am.

I would like to say thank you to Rancho for supporting the Arts. I now have a more positive and passionate outlook on life. Rancho has helped many people find special meaning in their lives. I feel I can do almost anything any able-bodied person can do, because of the passion and love I have for life. The only limitations I have are the ones I set for myself.

Although the way I use my camera and computer and the way I use various media have been adapted to my ability, I know I am an artist. That's how I roll!



JOEL CASTRO



I was born just three weeks before Christmas in 1985 in Guatemala. I moved to El Salvador two years later, then was soon brought to the United States.

School was not a problem for me. I graduated from high school in 2004, and my life changed because I had no more friends to talk to. It was also time for me to work. I started working for minimum wage. Suddenly, my life was very different. I was up at 7 a.m. each day, and wouldn't return home until 8 p.m. I didn't have a car, so I rode my bike everywhere.

Soon I was working two jobs. Sometimes my bike would have a flat tire and I had to walk long distances. I tried working the overnight shift but that wasn't any better. Finally I got a job as a driver at FedEx.

I was able to move out on my own and buy a car, because now I had a good job. But it seemed like I was working 24/7. Then as unbelievable as it sounds, I had a stroke, was paralyzed and was hospitalized for almost a year. Thank God for this gift of art. It has helped me find a new purpose in life. Thank you, Rancho, for giving me my life back!

JOEL CASTRO



JOSE CEDENO



Early in my youth I began to develop an attraction for the arts, primarily Fine Arts. Looking at pictures of paintings in magazines always fascinated me. I did not have access to art museums, art galleries, and art school because of living in a small town in my native Cuba. Occasionally I copied landscapes in color pencils. After graduating from high school I enrolled in architectural school, where I was trained in drawing, design, watercolor painting, art history, modeling, and building construction. I was able to endure the very hard physical demands despite the fact that I had contracted polio at age two.

Although I fulfilled my dream, working in architecture and construction is physically demanding for someone with a disability. When my polio returned in the 1980s, I went from walking normally to having to use a power wheelchair (Post-Polio Syndrome afflicts the bodies of polio survivors with the same or even more severe symptoms than those they previously overcame). I had to abandon my profession and retire, so I went back to painting and became a full-time artist. I can't imagine what my future would have been if Rancho, Dr. Perry and the Rancho Post-Polio Support Group had not been there for me.



Jose Cedeno

LYDIA CHAVEZ



I was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, where I was stricken with polio before my first birthday. I came to the United States in 1973 at age 25 in hopes of finding better medical care. Soon I was at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center and my life began to improve.

Polio has placed many obstacles before me. Dealing with post-polio syndrome and complications such as asthma sometimes makes me feel like I am at my limit. But every time I think I can take no more, something magical happens. Now when I work on my ceramics, I forget about the pain from polio. Each piece I create is like “my little children.” I thank my ceramics teacher for keeping me motivated.

I am forever grateful to Rancho Los Amigos, not only for providing me with the best healthcare, but for nurturing me as an artist and allowing me to participate in the Art of Rancho program.

Lydia Chávez Mantoya.



STEVE CLAY



I was a highly successful artist when I suffered a debilitating stroke that left me unable to paint. I was afraid my career as an artist might be over. I arrived at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in 1995 in a wheelchair, having lost feeling in my painting hand and arm, as well as in my right leg.

Rancho’s clinicians and therapists worked with me hour after hour, guiding me as I pursued my dream of painting again. After two years of rehab, painstaking effort, and the love and support of my treatment team, I was ready to start again.

Motivated by an overwhelming desire to get back into the stream of life, I succeeded in readapting by learning to draw with my left hand. As my therapy progressed, I regained the use of my right hand. I now use both hands in my work. Critics and friends tell me that my style has not changed, but it now has a more earthy and spiritual quality. Today my works of art hang in museums and galleries around the world.



In addition, I truly enjoy teaching the visual arts in the Don Knabe Pediatric Arts Program. I love being a catalyst to help the young people of today blossom into the artists of tomorrow.

I am very thankful to Rancho for giving me back my dream!

Steve Clay

ROBERT CORBIN



When I had a stroke in February 2002, which paralyzed my left side, I was sent to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center for treatment. In the month that the Rancho therapists and doctors worked on me, I regained strength and movement in my arm and leg. Thank God for Rancho Los Amigos.

I started to draw when I was there, and eventually the staff encouraged me to join the Art of Rancho program. Before my stroke I worked as an advertising production artist, and art continues to be an inspiration to me today. For example, I like showing my work and speaking with patients and their families at Rancho's annual Stroke Fair.

One of my greatest pleasures was serving as an instructor in the Don Knabe Pediatric Arts Program at Rancho. I was pleased and amazed at the talent and commitment of Rancho's pediatric patients with disabling illnesses and injuries. They are truly an amazing group of young people.

Most importantly, Rancho will always be in my heart for helping me put my life back together.

Robert Corbin



REY DIMAS MORENO



I was born in El Salvador. Searching for a better life, I came to the United States with my own American Dream. But in August 2004, I was affected with Guillain Barre Syndrome, a neurological disorder with no known cure, and was diagnosed with quadriplegia. I was dependent on a ventilator while an inpatient at another hospital and nursing home for 18 months.

Then I came to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, where everything changed for the better. Because of the gains I made thanks to Rancho's excellent Physical and Occupational Therapists,

I was able to return to my home and my wife. I wish to thank my wife for all her support and for always being by my side. I am still a Rancho outpatient. I give thanks to God and to the doctors, therapists, nurses and staff of Rancho for everything they have done for me as I have transitioned from inpatient to outpatient care.

I am also thankful for the opportunity to discover art during my rehabilitation program. I especially like painting with acrylics and I also love being part of the Art of Rancho program.

Dimas



ARAM DZHAVALIKYAN



I was born in Armenia on October 25, 1970. My family moved to Los Angeles when I was 10 years old. When I was a senior in high school, I was shot while riding in a car and became a complete paraplegic. I was taken to a hospital in Hollywood, where I spent three months before being transferred to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. During my three and one-half month stay at Rancho, the doctors and staff took really good care of me. They knew how to treat my condition.

I always liked to paint. But after my injury I really became involved in my art work. In 1995, I began taking private lessons with my friend Raffi, who has always encouraged me to continue to improve as an artist.

While I was completing the Rancho driving program I saw one of the Art of Rancho calendars. I was very impressed with what I saw, and now I am part of the Art of Rancho. Before joining the program, I had nowhere to show my work. Now the Art of Rancho program provides me with the venue to show what I do!

Dzhaivalikyan Aram



FRANCISCO ESTRADA



I was only 16 years old when I became the victim of a drive-by shooting and suffered a spinal cord injury that left me paralyzed. I was treated at Martin Luther King/Drew Medical Center and transferred to Rancho Los Amigos for what became perhaps the most important year of my life.

I always had the talent to draw, but one of Rancho's Social Workers, Mike Bullock, got me interested in mouthstick painting. I started slowly, but as I started to improve after a few tries I realized that my success at painting was rebuilding my self-confidence.

I began concentrating on what I could do, not what I couldn't do. I feel fortunate I came to Rancho and found the people who inspired me to do something positive with my life.

I've come a long way, thanks to Rancho. I know now that I can accomplish great things as an artist. Art has become my motivation, and the dedicated staff members of Rancho have been my motivators!

Francisco Estrada



MONIQUE FOREST



I was just 21 years old when a viral infection and high fever left me with limited mobility from the waist down.

I was initially treated at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center, then transferred to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center for therapy. Because of the work I did with my Rancho treatment team, I was able to walk again with the use of a walker.

I began taking art workshops in 1980, and have learned to love working with a variety of materials. I particularly enjoy discovering new and different ways to paint and draw, and showing my pieces at the Art of Rancho show each year.

I thank Rancho for aiding me to restore the quality and spirit of my life, and for helping me make my artistic dreams come true.

Monique
Forest



DEBORAH GALLARDO



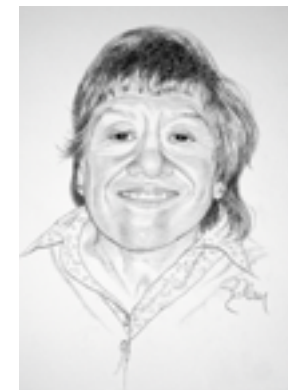
I was born with Cerebral Palsy, which prevents me from walking by myself. Someone has to hold me from the waist and then I move my legs in a walking motion. I cannot use my hands and have a speech impediment. I have my A.A. and B.A. in Liberal Studies. I am bilingual in English and Spanish.

I love to paint! I use color combinations that are pleasing to my eyes. I do not have enough control in my head to paint shapes and figures, so I use a headpointer to paint. This device allows a paint brush, crayon or marker to be screwed in so that I create my artworks.

Thanks to my grandpa, grandma and my mother for being so loving and caring, and for teaching me what's right and wrong.

Thanks to Rancho Los Amigos and Dr. Ida Wang for making me as independent as possible. Rancho fixes my long leg braces and my wheelchair, and has provided me with devices that help me communicate.

Dr. Wang keeps me in very good health so that my caregivers and I don't have to worry about my health. My caregivers take very good care of me, and so does Rancho!



Deborah Gallardo

MIGUEL GAYTAN



I was born in Mexico City, the second of nine children. I had a normal childhood, but when I was 16, I was accidentally shot and became a paraplegic.

In 1990, I came to the United States in search of a better life. Two years later, I became a patient at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center.

Almost immediately, I began to learn how to better cope with my physical and emotional challenges. Rancho taught me how to build a bridge to a more independent life.

I learned to do embossing, such as the piece above, and have found great joy in my art. I also found love.

In 1996 I was married to the love of my life, Gloria. Then in 1998, we moved to Phoenix, where we still reside. Thanks to what I learned at Rancho, I continue to search for new horizons as I strive to reach my dreams.

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink.



GLADYS GOMEZ



After a devastating car accident left me incapacitated for more than two years, I found Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. I was placed under the care of Dr. Robert Waters, who became my guardian angel. He helped me regain my health, my mobility and my independence.

As I improved, I became an advocate for individuals with disabilities. I began to learn about all the available programs, and was able to help provide assistance to others in need. I find great joy in creating flower arrangements, which provide a satisfying outlet for my creativity.

I have spent many, many hours developing my crafting skills, and it has helped me support my children's and my needs.

My sincere, heartfelt thanks to Rancho Los Amigos and all my special Rancho friends who have brought such beauty and joy to my life!



A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink.

JOSEFINA GUEVARA



Born and raised in Mexico City, I am a college graduate who once worked as a secretary for Mexico's largest political parties. I experienced a complication during pregnancy that resulted in tetraplegia. After I arrived at Rancho for treatment, my life began to change for the better. Thanks to my Rancho treatment team, I can now walk a little. But because of severe spasms in my legs, I still must rely on my wheelchair most of the time.

I crochet and create jewelry and sing as both hobbies and therapy. It not only helps me to strengthen my hands, but my spirit as well. I am happy to be part of the Art of Rancho and Performing Arts of Rancho programs.

I am strengthened by my four brothers, my sister and my father. My two daughters and my three grandchildren bring great joy to my life. My husband and the rest of my family are my motivation to keep on going.

I am very proud of my work, because it allows me to send a message to other Rancho patients: "If you have an accident, never lose faith in God, because miracles can really happen to you just as they have to me."

JOSEFINA GUEVARA GÓNEZ



ALICIA IBARRA



When I was just four years old, I was struck by polio. After visiting several places, I was finally referred to Rancho's polio clinic in 1990, beginning my journey to a more meaningful life.

Since then, Rancho has taken care of all my health needs. I have been an outpatient in both the polio and orthotics programs. I completed Rancho's driver training course and I now enjoy being a licensed driver.

I have always enjoyed drawing and painting, but I never attempted to paint on canvas until I was inspired by the Art of Rancho exhibition, seeing what the many talented artists were able to accomplish in spite of their disabilities.

I love nature and its beauty, and with my husband Armando's encouragement, I began painting. I hope you enjoy viewing my art as much as I do creating it. I would like to give a huge thanks to Rancho for giving me the inspiration and the forum to create and display my art. I will always be grateful for everything Rancho has done to help me reach my dream!



Alicia Ibarra

BEATRIZ IBARRA



One morning, more than ten years ago, I awoke and could not move. I was paralyzed! I was referred to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center and remained an inpatient for five months.

After extensive rehabilitation and therapy, I was able to go home and resume a useful life. Rancho has provided me with excellent treatment. Today I am seen as an outpatient there.

I have found joy and meaning in the art of sewing, which keeps me active, happy and young at heart. I specialize in custom towels, placemats, kitchen appliance covers, hot pads, pillows and clothing.

I find enjoyment in creating new and different ideas for each of my projects. Every day, as I bring a little beauty to others through my sewing art, I thank Rancho for assisting me in finding something wonderful to do with my life. And I love knowing that others take pleasure in my art each day.



JUAN LAGUNA



I was born with spina bifida and have been constrained to a wheelchair since birth. For the first ten years of my life, I lived in a hospital due to many surgeries and complications related to my condition.

As I grew up, I attended a special education magnet school in Los Angeles. It was here that I first began to paint and draw at the age of 14. However, it was not until I was a student at Long Beach City College that I became serious about my painting.

Painting has been a great passion in my life. It gives me an outlet to do something fulfilling and productive while having hours of enjoyment. As an artist, I see the world differently by focusing on the simple beauty all around me.

But without the strength to paint, I would not have progressed as an artist. I have been receiving medical support from Rancho since age 18. The Rancho staff has helped me learn to live strong with my condition, and I wish to thank each and every staff member for always being there for me.



MANUEL LUGO



I was born in 1955 in Sonora, Mexico. I am a Yaqui Indian. When I was six years old, I moved to Los Angeles. When I was 21, I was involved in a car accident in Modesto, California, and was paralyzed from the waist down.

I came to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center for outpatient therapy. Since my accident, I have had several major infections in my right leg, but thanks to excellent surgical work at Rancho, I still have my leg and my health has improved dramatically.

I have always been very interested in art, and thanks to Rancho, I have moved on to oil painting. Some of my favorite subjects are Indians, nature and faces. I would like to thank Dr. Salah Rubayi and his team for all the work they have done in saving my leg, and my Rancho nurses and therapists who kept the spirit of hope alive for me.

I am thrilled to be a part of the Art of Rancho program. I look forward to continuing my therapy at Rancho Los Amigos and working as an instructor in the Don Knabe Pediatric Arts Program.

Manuel Lugo



RUBEN MAURICIO



I was born and raised in East Los Angeles. With hard work and dedication, my parents saved enough to move our family away from a violent environment to a peaceful neighborhood in the Valley. After finishing my freshman year at Cal State Fullerton in pursuit of a graphic design degree, I was attending a birthday party in a wealthy area of Chino Hills when a stray bullet bounced off my spine and through my right lung. I was diagnosed with a complete spinal cord injury. The irony was that I moved away from danger, only to find it far away.

I soon became an inpatient in the Pediatrics section at Rancho Los Amigos, where my view of life changed forever. I am extremely thankful to be alive and blessed that I still have the mobility to utilize my natural-born gifts. Carpe diem, is how I live my life now. I live life to the fullest, prescribing myself high dosages of sports and art to avoid depression.



With the help of Rancho, Supervisor Don Knabe and the ladies of Las Floristas, I enjoy my life painting, drawing, sculpting, craft-making, welding, carving, taking pictures, going to school, playing wheelchair basketball, swimming, snorkeling, hand cycling, tennis, football, rugby, hockey, participating in long-distance marathons, writing and many other pursuits. Thanks to Rancho Los Amigos, my life is fantastic!

Rh Mauricio

DEISY MENDEZ



By the courtesy of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists Worldwide • www.vdmfk.com

I was born in Tabasco, Mexico. I had a normal life until March 31, 2005, when I was involved in a terrible car accident where I suffered a spinal cord injury in lumbar C4/C5 that left me paralyzed from the neck down. I was transferred to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center for therapy.

With the help of Rancho's doctors, therapists, nurses and my family, I began a new way of life. Worried and sad, I asked myself, "What could I do for a profession? Would I ever be able to work and be independent?"

Thanks to the Don Knabe Pediatric Art program and my instructors Robert and Kathy Thome, Steve Clay, Ruben Rios and Manuel Lugo, I learned to express myself through my artwork. Now I have been accepted as a member of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists.

My God and my art are my inspiration. They are what keep me living. And thanks to Rancho, I have the opportunity to share my art with the world!

Deisy



JOSE MORENO



I was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. I lived there until age 15, when my parents died suddenly and I came to Los Angeles to live with one of my sisters. After graduating from high school, I went to work for Wonder Bread, where I spent nine years.

Then, coming home from work one day, I was involved in a terrible automobile accident, and ended up as a spinal cord injury quadriplegia complete. Thanks to the doctors, therapists and nurses at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, I learned to live with my newly disabled body.

It's been more than 20 years now and I have adjusted very well to my life. I have always come to the art shows, and I have been amazed at the beautiful artwork. There is a saying that "You will never know if you can do something unless you try it."

I eventually started drawing with graphite, then watercolor, and now I'm doing oils. I use a hand splint to hold the brushes, and I feel that every painting I make is better than the previous one. I am very proud to be a Rancho graduate artist!



MORENO

MAGDALIA ORTIZ



At 20 years old, I was involved in a terrible auto accident which left me paralyzed from the waist down. With the support of my family and friends, I was able to overcome this situation.

I found Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, which has given me the tools to build an independent life, including the opportunity to pursue my artistic talents. I realized that painting gave me more than I could have possibly imagined. My talents have grown, and I have also grown as a person.

Rancho Los Amigos has also shown me how I can be independent while valuing my life as a whole. I am grateful to all of the doctors, therapists and nurses who have assisted me during my rehab process. I wish everyone the same happiness that I have found in my new life, thanks to the support and inspiration I received at Rancho!

Magdalia Ortiz



DAVID OSUNA



I was born in Paramount and have lived in Southern California all my life. I was on the football team at Mount San Antonio Community College, and was in line to get a scholarship to play football at a division one school. Life was good. But while I was vacationing in San Felipe, Mexico, I went off a cliff on a dirt bike and my whole world literally came crashing down. My spine was severed and my skull was fractured. I was paralyzed from the chest down. I had a number of surgeries to repair my face, skull, sinuses and to fuse my back. I almost died, not once, but many times. I thought my life was over.

Then I was transferred to Rancho Los Amigos, where I not only completed my rehabilitation, but found great joy and camaraderie in the wheelchair sports program. Most importantly, I started believing in myself again. Through Rancho I also started new adventures as part of the Don Knabe Pediatric Arts photography class. This class has allowed me to express myself in a different manner and to let others see life the way I see it.



I have accomplished many things over the last few years. In 2003, I was named the Rancho athlete of the year. I have been sky diving and skiing, and I am now getting back into desert riding. One of my greatest accomplishments was to be the first member of my family to graduate from college. And now I am actually teaching! Thank you, Rancho Los Amigos, for helping me believe in myself and for always being there to help me reach my goals in life!

David Osuna

BLANCA PEREZ



I was born in Tulancingo, Hidalgo, Mexico. For as long as I can remember, art has been at the center of my life. After I got my degree in Business Administration, I came to California to continue my career. But I was soon involved in a serious car accident and my future looked bleak. I was transferred to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, where the therapy has made all the difference for me. I would especially like to thank Debbie Diaz, who has always encouraged and challenged me to do my best.

After six months at Rancho, I was able to go home and live on my own again. My family's love and support has been very important in my healing process. In my free time, I like to paint and decorate cloth, ceramic objects, and candles. It's something that allows me to express my feelings. I am thankful to my family and friends for providing the resources to help me create my art. I also wish to thank Rancho for always being there for me during some of the most challenging times of my life.

Blanca R. Perez



ARTURO REYES



I was born in Santa Monica, CA and as a youth I excelled in sports. In high school, I won all-city honors in football. However, I always had an eye for the visual arts. I was deeply impressed by the vibrant colors and expressive quality of the masters of Impressionism such as Monet, Pissarro and Van Gogh.

In the ensuing years, I turned to photography and later the computer and Photoshop as the perfect way for me to create the visual, psychological and lyrical images that make up what I describe as "The Reyes Method." Certainly the work of Ansel Adams, the writings of Carl Jung and even the music of Led Zeppelin were also influences. In order to fully express my artistic vision, The Reyes Method uses it all!

A serious leg infection that brought me to Rancho Los Amigos has only reinforced in me the necessity of a life led in the spirit and pursuit of creativity. Such inspiration and optimism is nurtured at Rancho through a culture of dedication, skill and professionalism. I feel ready, willing and able now to share that creative spark that lies within us all and thereby fulfilling my creative possibility of inspiring the world with my art.



Arturo Reyes

WILLIAM RHOADES



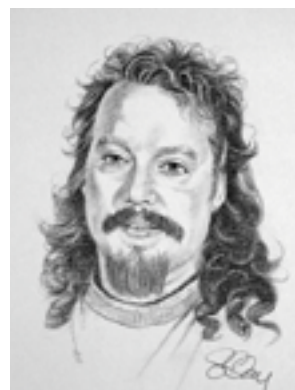
More than a decade ago I was a patient at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, looking at the possibility of never walking again, or perhaps at best, walking with braces and a walker.

I pointed out that the journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. That step and all the subsequent ones were made possible by the wonderful staff at Rancho. The journey has been a long one, but I am pleased to say that I now walk without braces or a walker.

As I stated then, I am in awe of the true artistry and discipline of the other artist participants in the Art of Rancho. I am very pleased to be a part of the Art of Rancho program. One of the lessons learned from my experience and association with Rancho is that everyone has a disability, but some are more visible than others.

I hope that my "success story" can serve as motivation and inspiration for all those who are struggling with any sort of disability. With faith and hope, no obstacle is too great to overcome.

William J Rhoades



RUBEN RIOS

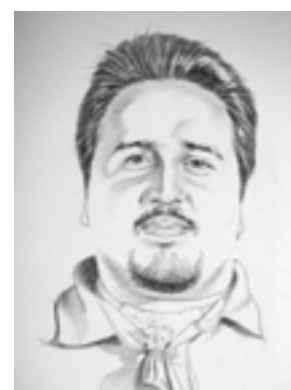


In 1988, I suffered a gunshot wound which left me with quadriplegia, completely paralyzed from the neck down. At Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, I was introduced to my first mouthsticks, which are special devices that allow paintbrushes and other objects to be controlled by the mouth.

Later I began to experiment by sketching with simple ball point pens. However, this method limited me to only a few colors. One day while I was visiting Rancho, I showed some of my sketches to one of my therapists. She suggested that she would like to display them in a showcase in one of Rancho's corridors.

After seeing my work on display, artist Robert Thome explained how others in my condition were excelling in life as mouthstick artists. Today I am a member of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists!

Robert and Rancho Los Amigos have been tremendous inspirations for me. Now I am working as an instructor with Robert to teach Rancho's young artists in the Don Knabe Pediatric Arts Program. Words cannot express the enjoyment and feeling of accomplishment that I receive from art. I intend to dedicate the rest of my life to becoming a better artist!



Ruben A. Rios

VIVIAN RIOS



In 1997 I came to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center's Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Rancho staff members recommended that I focus on a career in art.

Art was absolutely perfect for me, because I have been fascinated with ceramics since my junior year in high school. My mother gave me a potter's wheel on which I practiced to further develop my skills, and I am currently producing many ceramic pieces each year. I have also expanded my horizons to the art of painting.

Some day, I would like to teach the patients at Rancho about art. Rancho Los Amigos has provided me with motivation and a sense of accomplishment, and I am very thankful to the Rancho staff for their continuing encouragement and support of my art!

Rios



ESVIN RODRIGUEZ



By the courtesy of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists Worldwide • www.vdmfk.com

On January 7, 1996 I was walking out of my house when I heard gunshots. As I felt bullets pierce my skin, I fell to the ground thinking, "That's me!"

I was paralyzed from the neck down. Once I was stabilized, I was transferred to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, where I soon became interested in painting. When I paint with my mouthstick, I forget my past and only concentrate on what I am doing at that moment.

I believe my art expresses and praises the beauty in the world around me. I am very proud to be a member of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists, thanks to my friend and mentor Robert Thome.

In addition to painting, I also visit students at local schools, talking to them about my life and my art. I tell them what it is like to live as I live. I encourage them to develop their own artistic talent and not to let limitations get in their way. When I was shot, I prayed to God not to take away my life, because I have too much to do. Now I have figured out what I need to do—and I am doing it!



Esvin R.

ANN RUTH



I was injured in a gymnastics accident at age 5 (with the same injury as Christopher Reeve). I spent nine months at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. With these new life challenges, I was faced with learning how to live and breathe again. Due to the love and support from my family and a dear friend, I learned to breathe without a respirator. I also spent my time finding new outlets for fun and enjoyment. I discovered the talents I possessed and learned how to paint with a mouthstick, creating a variety of oil paintings which developed into my own line of greeting cards.

I graduated from USC and earned my MBA at Pepperdine. I worked for IBM, owned a restaurant, and am currently working for a computer forensics firm. I was the youngest recipient of the Governor's Trophy, and today I serve on many nonprofit and governmental boards and statewide committees. My hobbies include attending social events, traveling to exotic places, having fun in the sun, attending sporting events with my favorite teams (the Lakers, Dodgers, and the Kings), skydiving, hang-gliding and dune buggy riding.

ANN RUTH



MICHAEL SEALE



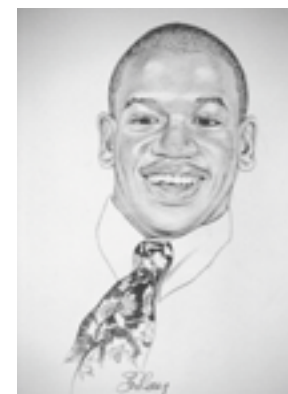
A man must always seek knowledge and experience while continuing to do his best to keep his business instincts sharp. How does he do this, you might ask? He reads books from powerful leaders and takes massive action in small steps, time after time.

Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center of Downey, California has been the beacon of light by providing me with lifelong friends, resources and business connections. The Art of Rancho annual art show is a golden stepping stone to building my luxury retail art empire.

Rancho has shown me through abstract art talents being expressed regularly and exposed to the community and the world, I too can make a great living and have a prosperous and powerful lifestyle.

Rancho has taught me that self-sufficiency leads to wonderful opportunities of personal growth and a way to maximize my full potential as an artisan.

Thank you friends for your unwavering support and patronage. Enjoy my new pieces and see you soon!



FERNANDO STURLA



I was born with congenital absence of my upper extremities, bilateral paraxial intercalary fibular hemimelia. I arrived in the United States in 1968 and became a patient at Rancho Los Amigos. My wife Ligia and I met in 1984 and were married one year later.

I paint ceramic and plaster Christmas ornaments and other ceramic pieces, such as the one pictured above, by using a mouthstick. I also design business cards, flyers and invoices on my computer.

I would like to thank my clinical experts at Rancho for all of the care they have provided to me throughout the years, and for inviting Ligia and I to be part of the Art of Rancho program. It feels fantastic to be in the company of such a special group of artists who have all become my friends.

Fernando Sturla



LIGIA STURLA



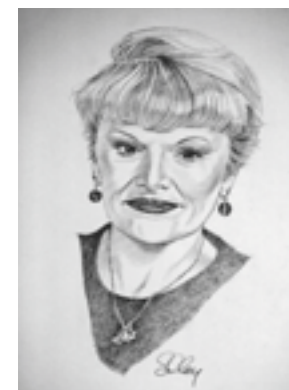
When I was just two years old, I was stricken with polio. In 1981, I came to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center to have surgery on my spine, and I've been an outpatient ever since.

Over the years, I have evolved as an artist. Today I enjoy creating a wide variety of art items, from "magic" wallets and business card holders to beautiful craft items such as the one pictured above. My

husband Fernando and I have grown to love Rancho and its staff not only for their clinical expertise, but for their spirit of caring and willingness to always be there for us.

I feel especially proud to be part of the Rancho Los Amigos graduate artist colony and know that with Rancho's help, my most rewarding work will be created in the future as I continue to grow as an artist!

Ligia Sturla



ADAM SUNESON



I am basically a self-taught artist. I love the work of Velazquez and Waterhouse. I have been painting since an early age, and today I do art shows across Southern California. I have always been encouraged to explore different facets of art in order to gain a unique perspective of life, and I try to embody this in my work.

While at an art festival in October 2005, I blacked out and went into a coma. The problem was a cyst on my brain. I underwent four brain operations, and finally was referred to Rancho Los Amigos for Speech Therapy in early 2006.

I am now attempting to recapture my motor control skills and stamina, so that I can participate in Rancho's Driver Training program and continue to improve.

I now come to Rancho twice a week for Occupational Therapy on an outpatient basis. I can now see my dream again...and I am pursuing it every day. I am very happy to become a part of the artistic atmosphere that Rancho

Adam Suneson



CASSANDRA TANG



I was born in Saigon, Vietnam, and am the eldest of three sisters. I came to the United States in 1980. On June 11, 1992, I earned my A.A. degree in Business Administration. Exactly one year later, my sister and I were victims of gunshots which left me paraplegic. My sister, Anh, was less fortunate. She lost her life and did not have a chance to finish her education at UCLA.

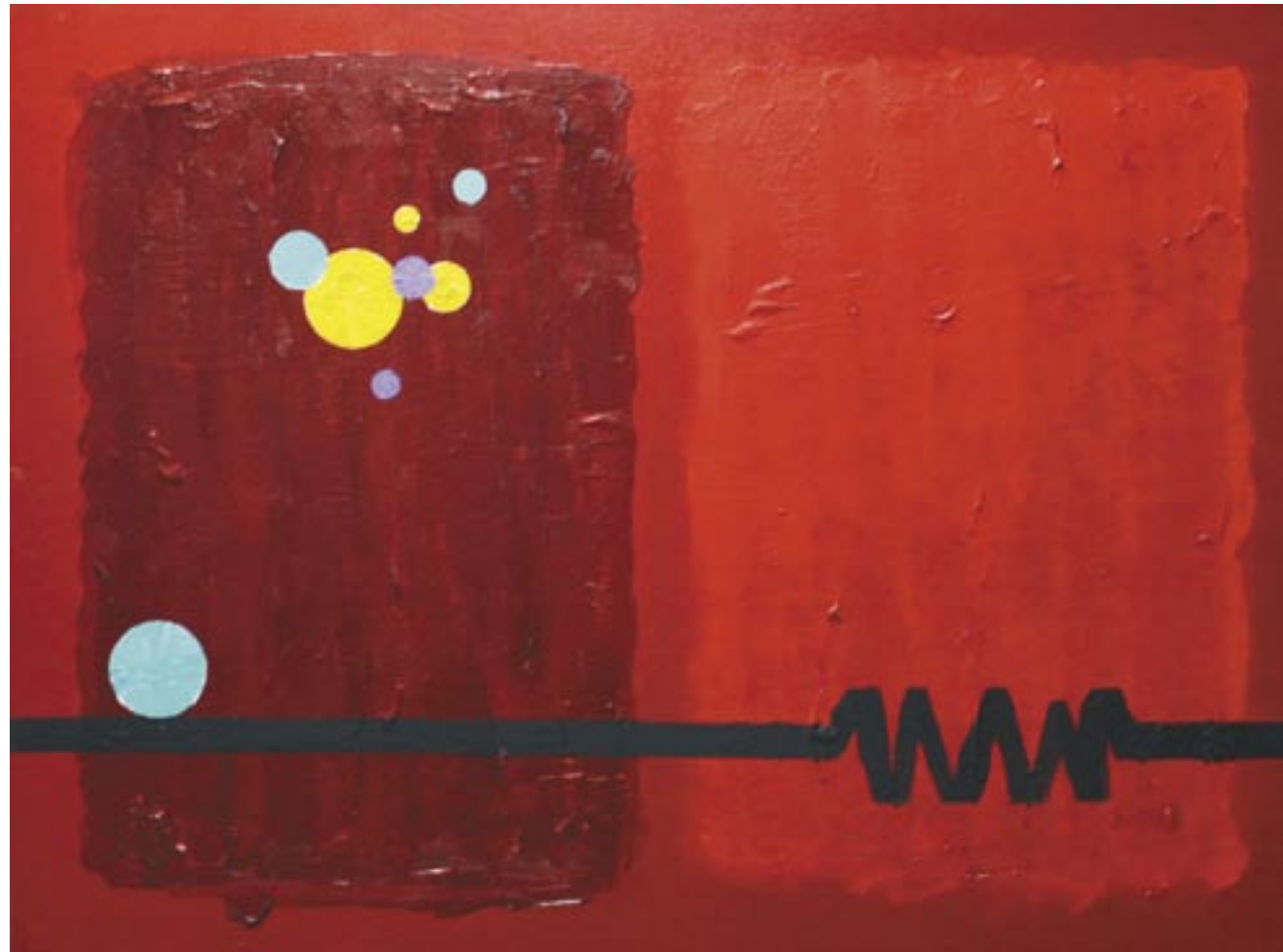
I was rehabilitated at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, where I am currently an outpatient. Special thanks to my physical therapists Joseph Damiani and Jan Furumasu, and my recreation therapist Adam Wilson. I am grateful to have received superb care from my doctors, nurses, therapists, driver training team and the rest of the staff. I'd like to thank the Rancho Los Amigos Foundation for the privilege of displaying my painting and embroidery work, such as the one above, alongside the inspirational artists of Rancho.

I'd also like to thank my parents, sister Josephine and brother-in-law Jason for all their love and support. I am proud to have earned a B.S. degree in Accounting from California State University, Los Angeles. My most passionate accomplishment is being a volunteer. I find it to be very rewarding and self-satisfying. Having gone through the experiences that I've had, I've learned that life is a gift. I live each day to the fullest and make it as meaningful as it can be. Through me, my younger sister Anh still lives.



Cassandra Tang

ROBERT THOME



By the courtesy of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists Worldwide • www.vdmfk.com

A football accident caused me a spinal cord injury that paralyzed me from the neck down. I did my rehabilitation at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, and continue as a Rancho outpatient today.

When you have a catastrophic disabling injury, you search for a door or a window so that you can express yourself. That's where the art came in for me.

After they showed me at Rancho how to use the mouthstick to paint, it was like learning a different language. Once you get it, there's no limit to what you can do. You can be free, you can fly, you can be anybody you want to be. Over the years, I have developed and mastered my own painting style based on what I discovered in my soul. I have also flourished by being part of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists.

Rancho taught me to believe in myself. Today, I mentor fellow mouthstick artists, teach in the Don Knabe Pediatric Arts Program and talk to children about the limitless possibilities life offers to us all through prayer, hard work and determination.

Robert



CHARLIE URIBE



I grew up in South Gate, graduating from South Gate High School in 2003. I began my college career at East Los Angeles, but just two months later I was shot and lost the use of my legs.

I came to Rancho for rehabilitation, where I spent two months overcoming my physical and emotional challenges. The Rancho team was very helpful in helping me find the ability within my disabling condition. I especially want to thank Lori Rowley, my Occupational Therapist, who motivated me to take better care of myself. My goals are to start walking again, to start working again and go back to school.



The Don Knabe Pediatrics Art Program has been a great experience for me. When I started, I didn't think I could draw well, but I was surprised with what I could accomplish. Now I am very pleased to be part of the Art of Rancho program. It's the next step in the road back for me, and I am so thankful for everything I've learned during my time at Rancho, where I regained my ability to hope and dream.

Charlie Uribe

JESUS VELASCO



I am the sixth of 14 children in my family. When I was just 10 months old, I was stricken with polio. Polio severely affected both of my legs and arms.

I came to the United States in 1992 to live with my brothers in San Francisco, looking for some medical help so that I could become more independent. There, I earned my high school diploma at an adult school and started to play quad rugby.

We moved to Los Angeles in 2000. A year later, I broke one of my legs in a fall and became an outpatient at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center. Thanks to the wonderful work of the staff, my leg has almost completely recovered.

Now I am moving on to the best years of my life.

When I got to Los Angeles, I began painting, and Rancho has given me a great forum to show my work. I am very appreciative of Rancho for giving me the opportunity to show my artwork along with the great artists of Rancho!



ROCIO VILLALOBOS



I was born in El Salvador. I used to be a very active child, but I was shot when I was just eight years old and suffered a major spinal cord injury. I thought I would be a prisoner of a wheelchair for life. We moved to California when I was 18 years old. I had spinal fusion surgery, then was transferred to Rancho Los Amigos. Rancho is the place where many amazing people took care of me, and made me realize this wasn't a story about a sad girl with a geography of scars, trapped in a wheelchair and wasting her life trying to find explanations.

This is about a girl who could find infinite beauty in anything, any little thing...a girl who could even love the person she had become. Thanks to the Rancho Wheelchair Sports program I again became the active girl I once was. Now I play basketball and at every practice I feel so thankful to be alive.

By participating in the Don Knabe Pediatric Arts Program I found that painting is a place where I can give form to all my feelings, which run together like the colors of a watercolor painting left out in the rain. I want to use my life like a canvas and paint every detail with my soul. Because of Rancho, I'm following my dreams and having a beautiful life that I am living fully and happily!



KELVIN WILKERSON



I was born and raised in Los Angeles and have been involved with the Arts since 1980. My interest in painting began as a small child when my mother gave me a paint-by-number set. I had a natural aptitude to blend colors and later learned how to compose themes with dynamic subject matters.

I was making an excellent living as an artist, but I suffered a debilitating stroke in October 2001 which threatened my ability to paint.

During my rehabilitation at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, my treatment team encouraged me to begin painting again. With Rancho's support, I am again creating the landscapes, seascapes, portraits and other creations that define me as an artist.

Although my stroke challenged my creative future, Rancho helped me learn how to make the most of my remaining ability. I continue to get stronger each day. My spirit soars each time I begin to paint. I thank my friends at Rancho for believing in me and helping me believe in myself.

Kelvin Wilkerson



WILL YORK



Thank you, Rancho team, for all your encouragement and help. After my mountain biking accident in 2001 left me with a major spinal cord injury, everyone at Rancho consistently told me that I could do every activity I did before, with some adaptations. They were right. I've snow skied and ridden hand cycles and rolled through the woods in my chair. One activity that doesn't take a lot of adaptation for me is painting. I'm thankful for the annual Art of Rancho exhibitions, which have inspired me to pick up my painting supplies and put some ideas on paper or canvas.

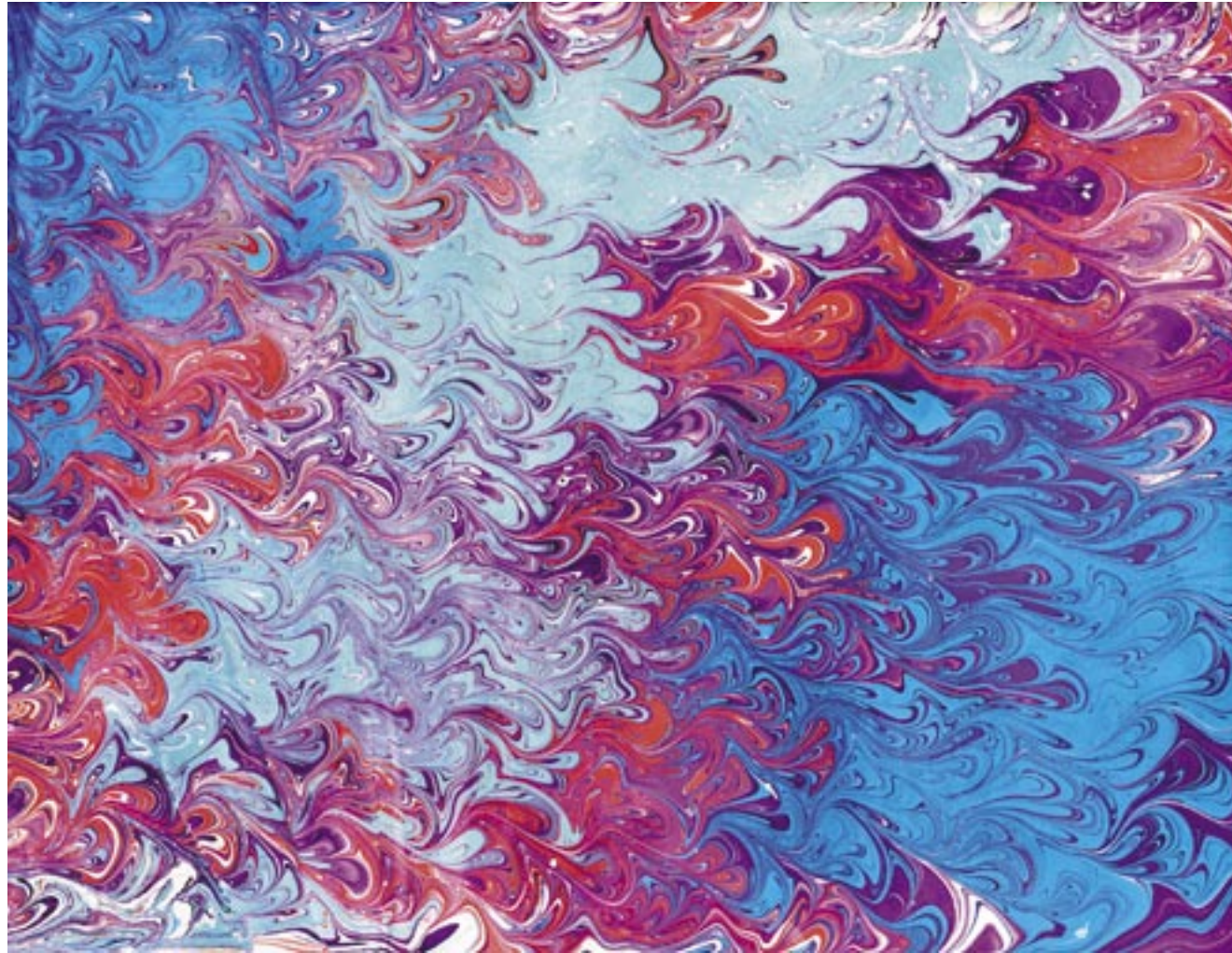
During the 34 years prior to my accident, I pushed my body to compete in races, climb mountains, and do a lot of my favorite kind of work—hard labor. Now, constant pain is more debilitating than paralysis, but it has caused me to ask a lot of tough questions about life, love, God and the meaning of everything.

My new life goal is to push my mind to study life's deepest questions and then write about them, and that requires a lot of time. Inspired by the Art of Rancho, I do fine art to see immediate results. Thank you, Rancho!



Wm. M. York

KENNETH YOUNGER



I was born in Los Angeles and raised in the small community of Watts. I am the middle child of five siblings. My interests are chess, reading, sports, religion, education and art.

My education was delayed due to a wrestling accident which caused injuries to my spinal cord and left me with quadriplegia. Rancho Los Amigos has been a big part of my life—first as a patient, then as a volunteer, and now as an artist and a teacher for Rancho.

I was proud to be selected with my friend Jim Anderson as Rancho volunteers of the year in 2001. We were also honored by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for volunteerism.

The medium I work in as an artist is called marbling. I am exploring new artistic horizons daily. Being an artist has made it possible to share the joy of art with others both at Rancho and as a teacher for special education students.

Kenneth Younger



PAINTING BY REY DIMAS MORENO
BACK COVER PAINTING BY MAGDALIA ORTIZ